MO' BETTER BLUES

LOVE SUPREME

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by

Spike Lee

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Forty Acres And A Mule Filmworks
Ya-Dig Sho-Nuff
By Any Means Necessary
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No matter what ... it is
with God. He is gracious and
merciful. His way is through
love. In which we all are.
It's truly A LOVE SUPREME.

- John Coltrane -

1 EXT: BROOKLYN STREET - DAY

Four kids are yelling at the top of their lungs.

TYRONE
Bleek. Yo, Bleek. Yo, Bleek. Come on out to play. Come on out to play.

JOE
We're wasting time on him.

ANGLE - WINDOW

LILLIAN, a middle-aged woman, sticks her head out of the fourth-floor brownstone window to see what all the commotion is about.

LILLIAN
Boys! Boys! Please be quiet.

CLOSE - TYRONE

TYRONE
Sorry, Mrs. Gilliam. We want to know if Bleek can come out?

CLOSE - LILLIAN

LILLIAN
I understand that, but your noise has to stop.

She pulls her head back in.

2 INT: APARTMENT - DAY

WE DOLLY BACK as Lillian leads us into the living room where BLEEK, eight years old, is practicing his scales on a trumpet. His father, affectionately known as BIG STOP, sits in front of a TV watching a baseball game with the sound off.

LILLIAN
Bleek, didn't I tell you to tell your hoodlum friends not to come around here?

BIG STOP
Aw, Gem! Leave the boy alone.

BLEEK
Can I go outside now?

LILLIAN
Not until you finish your practice.

BLEEK
What about then?

LILLIAN
We'll see.

BIG STOP
Let the boy be a boy, have some fun.

LILLIAN
He could be a bum for all you care. Running the streets with those wild kids.

TYRONE (OS)
Yo, Bleek! Yo, Bleek! Come on out.

LILLIAN
That chile is gonna drive me up a wall. Go tell him to go home.

BLEEK
Mommy, you don't let me do anything.

3 EXT: STREET - DAY
CLOSE - WINDOW

BLEEK
Yo, Ty. What did I tell ya about that stuff?

CLOSE - TYRONE

TYRONE
Are you coming or not?

CLOSE - BLEEK

BLEEK
When I'm done.

CLOSE - TYRONE

TYRONE
Done what?

CLOSE - BLEEK

BLEEK
Finish my lessons.

ANGLE - KIDS

SAM
Forget him.

TYRONE
We're going.

CLOSE - BLEEK

BLEEK
I'll see ya later.

ANGLE - KIDS

TYRONE
I'm glad my moms ain't like your moms. My moms lets me do whatever I want, when I want.

JOE
Me too!

LOUIS
Yeah!

CLOSE - BLEEK

BLEEK
I said I'll see ya later.

CLOSE - TYRONE & SAM

TYRONE
We'll see you later ... FAGGOT!

SAM
SISSY!

The kids take off down the block.

CLOSE - TYRONE

Pain is all over his face as he watches his friends run down the block having big fun. From his prison window, they are having the times of their lives.

LILLIAN (OS)
Bleek, get your butt out of that window.

4 INT: LIVING ROOM - DAY

Bleek stands in the living room with his mouth all stuck out.

BLEEK
Mommy, I never get to play with my friends. Now they call me a faggot. I ain't no faggot.

LILLIAN
Don't pay those fools no mind.

BIG STOP
A FAGGOT!

BLEEK
I'm sick and tired of this trumpet. I hate the trumpet.

Big Stop looks at his son, gets up from in front of the game and goes to him.

BIG STOP
Don't say that, Bleek.
(he puts his arm around him)
You'll have a lot of time to play with your friends. Don't hate that instrument, it's also your friend. We'll go to a game. Just me and you. I'll make it up to you.

CLOSE - BLEEK

BLEEK
I still hate it.

Bleek sticks the trumpet into his mouth.

SMASH CUT TO:

5 CLOSE - TRUMPET IN MOUTH - TWENTY YEARS LATER

Bleek is onstage at "Beneath the Underdog." It is one of the most popular jazz clubs in Manhattan. The smoke-filled club is packed and Bleek is killing, he's firing as he heads his BLEEK QUINTET. On the small stage with him is

RHYTHM JONES on drums, LEFT HAND LACEY on piano, BOTTOM HAMMER on bass, and SHADOW HENDERSON on tenor and soprano sax.

CLOSE - SHADOW

Shadow looks directly at Bleek and begins to take his solo.

CLOSE - BLEEK

Bleek gives him a look that says plainly, "Keep it short."

CLOSE - SHADOW

Shadow winks at Bleek and moves upstage. He is definitely playing to and for the audience.

ANGLE - BLEEK

Bleek walks offstage and stands next to GIANT, a smallish man who is dressed very sharp. He's the manager of the band.

BLEEK
There he goes again.

GIANT
He's a chucker. He comes off the bench shooting. You'd never see no passes from him. A selfish ballplayer.

CLOSE - SHADOW

Shadow is still playing away.

BLEEK (OS)
He's only out for himself.

GIANT (OS)
Bleek, sooner or later you gotta do something quick. It's your team. It's your band. You're the coach.

CLOSE - BLEEK

BLEEK
I know.

ANGLE - STAGE

Bleek walks back onstage and up to the microphone and interrupts Shadow's solo.

BLEEK
Shadow Henderson on tenor sax. Let's hear it for him. Ladies and gentlemen, Shadow Henderson.

CLOSE - SHADOW

Shadow takes a bow, then snarls at Bleek.

ANGLE - STAGE

The other members of the band exchange looks, "What's going on?" Bleek nods at Rhythm and on the beat, the band comes back in together for the final chorus of the song.

CLOSE - BLEEK

He smiles back at Shadow.

ANGLE - STAGE

The song ends.

ANGLE - CROWD

The audience enthusiastically applauds.

CLOSE - BLEEK'S MOUTH

In SLOW MOTION the mouthpiece comes out of his mouth.

CLOSE - BLEEK - IN REAL TIME

BLEEK
Thank you. This brings us to the end of our first set. On drums ...

CLOSE - RHYTHM

BLEEK (OS)
Rhythm Jones.

CLOSE - BLEEK

BLEEK
Left Hand Lacey ...

CLOSE - LEFT HAND LACEY

BLEEK (OS)
on piano.

ANGLE - BLEEK

BLEEK
Bottom Hammer on bass.

CLOSE - BOTTOM

CLOSE - BLEEK

BLEEK
And Shadow Henderson on tenor and soprano sax.

CLOSE - SHADOW

He takes the biggest bow, the crowd responds with cheers.

ANGLE - STAGE

BLEEK
My name is Bleek Gilliam and we thank you for coming, because you didn't have to come. You coulda stayed home and watched Arsenio Hall.

The audience laughs.

BLEEK (contd)
Just kidding. Seriously, I like the brother. God bless him ... So we do appreciate it. We do thank you.

ANGLE - AUDIENCE

They applaud as the band leaves the stage.

ANGLE - STAGE

BLEEK
We'll be back after a little break, so please make our beautiful waitresses work, tell 'em they look good and give 'em a tip. We all got to make a livin'. Here's Butterbean!

BUTTERBEAN, a dark, round man, is the M.C. for the club; he's a comic/blues singer.

ANGLE - BACKSTAGE

WE FOLLOW Giant as he hands towels to the guys as they go to their dressing room. All of them are soaking wet.

CLOSE - BLEEK

The stage smile that was on Bleek's face has since disappeared.

ANGLE - DRESSING ROOM

Bleek, the last one in, slams the door.

BLEEK
Shadow, when are you gonna stop grandstanding?

SHADOW
The people eat it up.

BLEEK
That ain't 'bout nuthin' but some ego shit. You taking all day and night for your solos. Cut that shit out.

SHADOW
Do I tell you what to play and for how long?

BLEEK
Hell no. You ain't me. You ain't the leader.

LEFT HAND
Bleek, he sounds good.

GIANT
Shut up! Who asked you?

LEFT HAND
Nobody asked me.

GIANT
That's what I thought. Shut the fuck up.

SHADOW
Midget, who asked you?

GIANT
Giant is the name.

SHADOW
Excuse me ... Midget.

BLEEK
Yo! Yo!

Everyone chills.

BLEEK
Shadow, do me a favor, do us all a favor. Do as I say ...

He looks at him.

BLEEK (contd)
or you could always quit.

SHADOW
I could quit.

The room falls deathly quiet, nobody is saying anything, just looking, until ...

GIANT
Left Hand.

LEFT HAND
What?

GIANT
Your moms is so old she has powdered milk coming out of her titties.

The guys explode with laughs, the tension is broken.

LEFT HAND
Midget, your moms is so old, she has Jesus' beeper number.

GIANT
Your mother has one pubic hair on her vagina with a curler on it.

On cue, everyone jumps in and it's a "dozens" free-for-all.

ANGLE - STAGE

Butterbean is going through his routine. He has a sophisticated country vibe about him. A unique blend of the Bayou and Uptown, it's a strange and funny mix. Butterbean keeps getting bothered by a heckler, STERLING, a well-dressed Black man. He tries to ignore him, but the guy won't stop. Finally Butterbean has had it; he walks over to the guy.

BUTTERBEAN
Sir, why are you fuckin' with me?

STERLING
Why? Cuz you're so country. So Bama. I didn't know niggers like you still existed. This is the 1990's. We're out of slavery.

BUTTERBEAN
Where are you from?

STERLING
The Upper East Side.

BUTTERBEAN
What the fuck is the Upper East Side?

STERLING
Manhattan, New York City. The Big Apple.

BUTTERBEAN
What's your name?

STERLING
Sterling Randolph.

BUTTERBEAN
Sterling Randolph, my name is Butterbean and I'm from a little country town called Two Seconds Offa Nigger's Ass. Keep fuckin' with me and I'm gonna be homesick.

The crowd roars.

STERLING
Go back onstage and play your banjo, and ...

Before Sterling can finish his sentence, Butterbean is all over him like white on rice. It's a big commotion.

ANGLE - TABLE

Two big bouncers, EGGY and BORN KNOWLEDGE, fly into the fracas and separate the two combatants. Sterling is manhandled out of the club into the street. They pass two White men, MOE and JOSH FLATBUSH, brothers who co-own the club. Moe is the mouth. Josh is the numbers whiz.

CLOSE - MOE

MOE
This a classy joint, a classy joint. I'm running a classy joint here.

CLOSE - JOSH

JOSH
Not for nuthin'.

CLOSE - MOE

MOE
We ain't having it. This ain't uptown. This is "Beneath the Underdog."

CLOSE - JOSH

JOSH
A class operation.

ANGLE - RITA AND CORA

Rita and Cora are two of the waitresses at "Beneath the Underdog." They bounce from table to table, taking orders, taking tips, trying to make that money.

6 INT: BLEEK'S LOFT - MORNING

It's early morning and the CAMERA MOVES SLOWLY through Bleek's loft. There is hardly any furniture at all; however, WE DO NOTICE two big mural-size posters of Bleek's heroes in life -- John Coltrane and Willie Mays. Finally WE COME UPON two figures underneath a giant red comforter. The alarm clock goes off.

CLOSE - ALARM CLOCK

ANGLE - BED

Bleek's head emerges from under the comforter and he drags himself out of bed and into the bathroom. The other body begins to stir also. Bleek comes back and sits on the bed.

BLEEK
Wake up! Wake up! Wake up!

Bleek pulls the comforter off the bed and WE SEE INDIGO still asleep, a very beautiful sister.

BLEEK (contd)
Ladybug! Let's go.

INDIGO
I don't want to go to school.
I don't want to go to school.

Bleek laughs because he realizes this is a reenactment of her childhood.

BLEEK
I'm not your father.

Ladybug gets up.

INDIGO
I'm up, was just dreaming.

BLEEK
Stop dreaming or you'll be late for school and all your students will have their little hearts broken.

INDIGO
Talkin' 'bout broken hearts, my moms always told me, don't ever never marry a musician, let alone go out with one. You'll be inviting grief, tears, pain and heartbreak to your doorstep. She said, "Honey, let me tell you one thing. Leave those visitors outside. Don't let them into your home."

BLEEK
Your mother wasn't talking 'bout me.

INDIGO
Maybe not. Bleek, you're a good brother, but you still don't know what you want.

BLEEK
Now I guess it's time for Confessions of a Modern Day Dog.

INDIGO
Like it or not, Bleek, you're a dog. A nice dog, but a dog nonetheless.

BLEEK
I won't argue the point. You know how I am. It's no secret.

INDIGO
Love you or leave you, huh?

BLEEK
Did I say that?

INDIGO
You didn't have to say it.
That's what you're thinking.

BLEEK
Mind reader now.

INDIGO
I read you like the Daily News. It's simple, just look at the pictures.

BLEEK
Damn.

She laughs.

7 EXT: BLEEK'S STOOP - MORNING

As Bleek comes down his stoop he sees his father, Big Stop, already sitting there waiting. Big Stop used to be a major league catcher; he wears his old jersey and cap.

BIG STOP
Bleek, you're late.

BLEEK
Three minutes.

BIG STOP
Probably one of your lady friends no doubt held you up.

BLEEK
Not at all ...

As if on cue, Indigo comes running out of the house.

CLOSE - BLEEK

He's busted.

ANGLE - INDIGO

INDIGO
Good morning, Mr. Gilliam, sorry I gotta run, late for school.

She kisses Big Stop on the cheek before she runs down the block.

ANGLE - STREET

BLEEK
How's the arm?

BIG STOP
I'm off the DL.

BLEEK
Good, let's throw.

This is their ritual, which is also the ritual of millions of other fathers and sons -- playing catch. This is a large part of their communication. They start tossing the hardball back and forth.

CLOSE - BIG STOP

BIG STOP
You love her!

CLOSE - BLEEK

BLEEK
Like her.

CLOSE - BIG STOP

BIG STOP
What about the other one?

CLOSE - BLEEK

BLEEK
I'm not gonna lie. I like women and I find it hard to be with <u>just</u> one.

CLOSE - BIG STOP

BIG STOP
Just be careful of what you do ask for, you might get it.

CLOSE - BLEEK

He doesn't say anything.

CLOSE - BIG STOP

BIG STOP
And don't bring any babies into this world before you get married. If I see another sixteen-year-old Black unwed mother pushing a stroller down the street, I don't know what I'll do.

CLOSE - BLEEK

BLEEK
I hear ya.

CLOSE - BIG STOP

BIG STOP
That's it. That's enough.

He feels his arm.

CLOSE - BLEEK

BLEEK
We just started.

ANGLE - STREET

BIG STOP
My arm feels funny.

BLEEK
Ya coming up?

BIG STOP
Naw. I'll go on home.

BLEEK
Call you later. Gotta take care of yourself.

BIG STOP
Just old, that's all.

Bleek hugs his father.

8 INT: LOFT - MORNING

Bleek is practicing his trumpet; first he's working on his scales ...

DISSOLVE TO:

ANGLE - BLEEK

Bleek is still practicing, on to another segment of his daily program, working on his chords.

DISSOLVE TO:

CLOSE - BLEEK

Bleek works on his muted trumpet. Because of the different light we should be able to tell several hours have elapsed. Bleek is in full concentration when we hear the intercom buzzer. It buzzes several more times before he himself hears it.

ANGLE - BLEEK

Pissed, he goes to the intercom, presses a button, and a small TV screen comes on.

CLOSE - SCREEN

WE SEE a very attractive sister staring right INTO THE CAMERA. This is CLARKE, Bleek's other friend.

BLEEK (OS)
Clarke, what time is it?

She looks at her watch.

CLARKE
One o'clock.

CLOSE - BLEEK

BLEEK
And what does that mean?

CLOSE - SCREEN

CLARKE
You are practicing.

BLEEK (OS)
Right. I'm practicing, and if you know I'm practicing and you
(MORE)

BLEEK (OS contd)
know I don't finish till two o'clock, which is for another sixty minutes, why are you ringing my buzzer?

CLARKE
Because I love you.

ANGLE - BLEEK

He buzzes her in, leaves the door cracked open and walks into the kitchen.

ANGLE - KITCHEN

Bleek pours himself some water as Clarke kisses him.

BLEEK
How many times do I have to tell you I have a certain amount of hours allotted to practice daily? You know my program, yet you consistently overlook it.

CLARKE
I get the times mixed up. Everything with you is so damn regulated. A certain time to do this, a certain time to do that. Everything is on a schedule, a timetable.

BLEEK
Life is too short. I need it like this to do all the things I gotta do. I like order.

CLARKE
Order is fine, but your shit is ridiculous.

BLEEK
And what do you want?

CLARKE
When I think about what a man means to me, one of the first things that comes to mind is knowing what he wants, being decisive. You don't know what you want. Make up your mind. Be a man. Don't be wishy-washy on me.

BLEEK
I know what I want. My music! Everything else is secondary.

CLARKE
I knew you would say that.

BLEEK
Why'd you ask then?

CLARKE
Let me give you a tip. If your music is the be all to end all as you state, to ensure that, you better get rid of Giant as your manager.

BLEEK
Clarke, please stay out of my business. Thank you.

CLARKE
I'm looking out for your best interests.

BLEEK
Why are you bringing all this confusion into here?

CLARKE
Bleek, I'm not saying I'm a very wise person, but everybody is a teacher. People can teach you two things. What to do and what not to do.

Bleek puts the trumpet in his mouth, looks at her while fingering the valves.

CLARKE (contd)
Say something.

BLEEK
Now that you have totally disrupted my program, we might as well make love.

Clarke laughs dead in his face.

CLARKE
For once let's be real. What you and I do is not make love.

BLEEK
What would you call it?

CLARKE
It's definitely not making love!

BLEEK
Boning!

CLARKE
I've heard you say a lot more.

BLEEK
I got a million of them. The Mo' Better.

CLARKE
Mo' what?

BLEEK
The Mo' Better makes it Mo' Better.

CLARKE
Anyway, that's what we do. We don't make love, you don't love me. But in the meantime I'll settle for some of that Mo' Better.

BLEEK
I also got some of that In Case of Emergency Break Glass Dick.

Clarke takes off her top and puts it on the end of his trumpet. Bleek follows her as she leads him back to the bedroom.

ANGLE - BEDROOM

Bleek continues to play his trumpet as Clarke disrobes and slides into the bed.

CLOSE - BLEEK

In SLOW MOTION Bleek removes the trumpet from his mouth but we still continue to hear his music in the BG.

JUMP CUT TO:

BLEEK

giving Clarke the "Mo' Better."

BLEEK (VO)
I don't know what you would call it, but whenever I'm making love to a woman, I find myself thinking about another woman, about her sexuality. Who knows, they might be thinking of some other guy too!

EXTREME CLOSE UP - LIPS OF CLARKE AND BLEEK

Both are kissing passionately when Clarke gets caught up in the moment and bites Bleek's lip by accident.

ANGLE - BLEEK AND CLARKE

Bleek jumps up like he's been shot.

BLEEK
Shit!

CLARKE
I'm sorry.

BLEEK
That's my fucking lip. Please don't <u>ever</u> do that again.

CLARKE
I was playing.

BLEEK
Don't play with my lips.

Bleek storms out of the bedroom into the bathroom.

CLOSE - CLARKE

She's visibly upset.

BLEEK (OS)
You cut my fucking lip, it's bleeding.

CLARKE
I'm sorry. Jesus Christ, I said I'm sorry.

BLEEK (OS)
You're nuts.

CLARKE
Let me kiss it to make it "mo' better."
(she laughs)

BLEEK (OS)
Shit ain't funny.

CLARKE
I was joking ... Alright, I won't kiss you ever again.

CLOSE - BLEEK

Bleek looks into the bathroom and inspects his lip.

BLEEK
Good. I make my living with my lips.

9 INT: GIANT'S APARTMENT - DAY

WE MOVE SLOWLY through the cluttered messy studio apartment. Stacks and stacks of old newspapers are everywhere; seated at the kitchen table is Giant.

ANGLE - GIANT

Giant is on the phone with his bookie, PETEY. The New York Post sports section is laid out in front of him.

GIANT
How long do I have to hold on? C'mon, Petey, this is me, Giant.

PETEY (VO)
Hold on.

GIANT
Hurry up then.

Giant starts to circle his teams with a red pen.

CLOSE - PAPER

WE ARE TIGHT ON the latest line on today's baseball games.

CLOSE - GIANT

PETEY (VO)
Shoot!

GIANT
Finally. I'm putting down on all today's games.

PETEY (VO)
Shoot!

GIANT
Mets over Cards. Twins over Yanks. Dodgers, Pirates, Phils, Astros, Tribe, A's, Tigers, Red Sox, Blue Jays and the Angels.

PETEY (VO)
All of that?

GIANT
All of that. Gimme two C-notes on each.

PETEY (VO)
Can you cover that?

GIANT
Just make the bet.

PETEY (VO)
Two C-notes on each game.

GIANT
Out.
(he hangs up the phone)

10 INT: "BENEATH THE UNDERDOG" - DAY

The dark club is empty, with chairs on top of the tables. A shaft of light comes across the club as ROBERTO, the maintenance man, steps in with broom and dustpan.

ANGLE - ROBERTO

He looks around the empty club.

HIS POV

CLOSE - ROBERTO

He takes a chair off the table, sits down and lights a cigarette. In the BG, he hears voices and gets up quick, like he's busily at work.

ANGLE - DOOR

It's the M.C., Butterbean.

BUTTERBEAN
Roberto Clemente. Roberto Clemente.

CLOSE - ROBERTO

ROBERTO
Greatest ballplayer! Greatest!

CLOSE - BUTTERBEAN

BUTTERBEAN
How are you, my friend?

CLOSE - ROBERTO

ROBERTO
I'm doing fine.

Roberto sweeps the floor.

ANGLE - DOOR

Eggy and Born Knowledge come into the club.

EGGY
I told you to watch him.

BORN KNOWLEDGE
I did.

EGGY
You did not. I was watching you.

BORN KNOWLEDGE
You weren't looking hard enough.

EGGY
Just don't let Moe and Sy get hip.

BORN KNOWLEDGE
They don't have a clue. Not a clue.

ANGLE - DOOR

Rita and Cora enter the club.

RITA
There's no reason why I should be doubling your tips. No reason at all.

CORA
I'm trying.

RITA
Not hard enough.

CORA
Well, I'd better try harder because this ain't getting it.

RITA
You just gotta work it.

CORA
Work it?

RITA
Work it.

Rita sticks out her chest.

11 INT: "BENEATH THE UNDERDOG" CLUB - DAY

Josh is behind the calculator, doing his numbers. He does not even look at the calculator, just the receipts and papers in front of him.

MOE
What does it look like?

JOSH
It looks good.

MOE
What do the numbers say?

JOSH
The numbers look good.

MOE
Good.

JOSH
The numbers never lie.

MOE
That's what I like about numbers. People start lying from the crib, but not numbers.

JOSH
Moe, the numbers never lie.

12 EXT: "BENEATH THE UNDERDOG" - NIGHT

People begin to line up early to get in.

13 EXT: BACK ALLEY ENTRANCE - NIGHT

Roberto stands outside the back alley entrance. This is where the musicians come into the club.

ANGLE - ALLEY - NIGHT

Bottom and Rhythm walk towards the door.

BOTTOM
Can the cat play?

RHYTHM
Is the day long?

BOTTOM
Very long!

RHYTHM
There you go. But he's so evil-looking he can kill a brick.

BOTTOM
That evil.

They stop as Roberto opens the door.

ANGLE - DOOR

ROBERTO
Good evening, Mr. Bottom. Mr. Rhythm.

BOTTOM
Roberto Clemente.

ROBERTO
Greatest ballplayer. Greatest.

14 EXT: "BENEATH THE UNDERDOG" - NIGHT

The line is even longer than before. What's interesting is the racial makeup of the line. It's only half Black, the rest being young White middle-class and a flavoring of Japanese couples.

ANGLE - LINE

Giant comes around the corner, stops and looks at the line.

CLOSE - GIANT

ANGLE - HIS POV

CLOSE - GIANT

WE TRACK with Giant as he walks past the line up to the entrance where Eggy and Born Knowledge stand.

ANGLE - ENTRANCE

EGGY
No midgets allowed.

GIANT
The name is Giant.

BORN KNOWLEDGE
The circus left last week.

Giant ignores that crack.

GIANT
When are you gonna let the folks in?

EGGY
Lines are good for business.

GIANT
Is that you talking, or Moe and Josh?

BORN KNOWLEDGE
We can't have a smart thought? Why it got to be a White man? The Black man is God.

GIANT
Born Knowledge, please don't start your five percenter shit, cuz I don't want to hear it. Eggy, when are you letting people in?

EGGY
When it's time.

GIANT
And when is that?

BORN KNOWLEDGE
Time is when.

GIANT
The both of you can kiss my narrow black ass two times.

Giant tries to walk past them and he's blocked.

EGGY
Why did you do that?

BORN KNOWLEDGE
Use the back.

CLOSE - GIANT

He looks at them.

CLOSE - EGGY AND BORN KNOWLEDGE

They grin back.

CLOSE - GIANT

He walks away.

CLOSE - EGGY AND BORN KNOWLEDGE

EGGY
I didn't think so.

BORN KNOWLEDGE
He wants no part of this.

15 INT: "BENEATH THE UNDERDOG" - NIGHT

People begin to trickle in.

DISSOLVE TO:

MORE PEOPLE

taking their seats.

DISSOLVE TO:

THE CLUB

is almost full.

16 INT: DRESSING ROOM - NIGHT

The band is all there except Left Hand. Bleek is going over the numbers with the guys.

GIANT
Where's Left Hand?

SHADOW
Small as this dressing room is, he couldn't be hiding.

GIANT
Bleek?

BLEEK
He ain't here.

RHYTHM
I talked to him earlier.

GIANT
Five will get you ten he's with Connie.

BOTTOM
That's a sucker's bet.

ANGLE - DOOR

Left Hand comes into the dressing with his arm around a very attractive blonde White woman, CONNIE.

LEFT HAND
Sorry I'm late.

CONNIE
We had trouble getting a cab.

GIANT
Left Hand, you are late.

CONNIE
We're sorry.

Bleek stares at Left Hand, but he just sits down with Connie on his knee.

LEFT HAND
What did I miss?

GIANT
If your late ass woulda been here you woulda missed nada.

BLEEK
We were going over the numbers.

LEFT HAND
Then I didn't miss anything.

CLOSE - GIANT

He tries to catch Left Hand's attention, as he motions for Connie to leave.

CLOSE - LEFT HAND

He's too busy messing with Connie to notice.

ANGLE - BLEEK

BLEEK
Connie, can you excuse us?

ANGLE - CONNIE AND LEFT HAND

LEFT HAND
Connie, get up.

CLOSE - GIANT

GIANT
All human beings who are not in this musical group please leave the dressing room.

CLOSE - CONNIE

She gets up too slow for Giant.

CLOSE - GIANT

GIANT
Let me repeat. If you ain't in this group, get the fuck outta here. <u>That means you</u>!

CLOSE - CONNIE

She kisses Left Hand.

CONNIE
I'll be down front.

She leaves.

ANGLE - DRESSING ROOM

BLEEK
Left Hand, that's some <u>out</u> shit.

SHADOW
She's out!

LEFT HAND
Why are y'all so hard on my lady?

GIANT
Your lady is fucking up, been fucking up. Y'know damn well nobody is allowed back here
(MORE)

GIANT (contd)
when we're about to go on. Everybody else's woman respects that except you and her.

LEFT HAND
It's because she's White.

GIANT
Because she's White?

BLEEK
Giant, be cool.

CLOSE - GIANT

GIANT
I have a brother just like you. When we were little he used to be a "Archie" comic book freak. If he had any money, that's where it went.

CLOSE - LEFT HAND

LEFT HAND
Is this a long story?

CLOSE - SHADOW

SHADOW
Shut up and listen.

CLOSE - GIANT

GIANT
Anyway, every issue they had these pinups of Betty and Veronica in bathing suits. My brother thought they were fine. One day he decided he was gonna put Betty and Veronica up all over our room. He tore out the pinups and Scotch-taped them to the wall.

CLOSE - BOTTOM

BOTTOM
And?

CLOSE - GIANT

GIANT
And my moms came into the room to check our homework. When she looked up and saw Betty and Veronica her eyes saw red. I said, "Get Larry, it wasn't me. I didn't do it. It was Larry's idea."

ANGLE - ROOM

The guys all laugh except Left Hand.

CLOSE - LEFT HAND

He's not amused.

CLOSE - GIANT

as he imitates his moms.

GIANT
If I ever -- WHACK -- see any White woman -- WHACK -- in my house again, I'LL KILL YOU -- WHACK-WHACK. Do you understand me? WHACK.

CLOSE - BOTTOM

BOTTOM
And?

CLOSE - GIANT

GIANT
I started to cry. "Mommy, don't kill my only brother. Don't kill him. Don't kill him. He loves Betty and Veronica."
(he laughs)

CLOSE - LEFT HAND

LEFT HAND
And the moral of the story is?

CLOSE - GIANT

GIANT
There is no moral to the story. Just keep that bitch outta here.

ANGLE - DRESSING ROOM

BLEEK
Do it.

SHADOW
I don't like her ass anyway.

BOTTOM
Do right, Left.

CUT TO:

ANGLE - STAGE

The band is playing onstage. As the song ends Bleek goes up to the microphone and announces the name of the composition; at the same time a table down front is making a lot of noise.

ANGLE - TABLE

The people are carrying on.

CLOSE - BLEEK

BLEEK
Will the people at that table right there, yeah, youse people. Be quiet.

ANGLE - TABLE

They continue to talk <u>loud</u>.

CLOSE - BLEEK

BLEEK
Hey! Hey! Shut the fuck up. Show some respect, at least for the people who have paid their good money to <u>listen</u> and not run their damn mouth.

ANGLE - CLUB

The audience applauds.

CLOSE - BLEEK

BLEEK
We thank you for your time and consideration.

Bleek counts off the time and the band begins to play.

CLOSE - BLEEK'S MOUTH

In SLOW MOTION Bleek puts his trumpet into his mouth.

17 INT: "BENEATH THE UNDERDOG" OFFICE - NIGHT

Giant knocks on the door and enters before Moe and Josh can answer.

GIANT
Did ya see the lines around the block?

MOE
We got eyes.

GIANT
It's been like this consistently. Bleek's packing 'em in.

Josh looks at Giant.

MOE
We are pleased.

GIANT
Look, Moe and Josh, we're gonna have to get mo' money. You're making a killing. What's fair is fair.

MOE
What we're paying you now is <u>fair</u>. It's also what you agreed upon.

GIANT
C'mon, Moe.

MOE
It's out of the question.

GIANT
Everybody's making money except the artist.

MOE
Don't hand me that artist doo-doo. They don't have any financial risks ... Go listen to the music.

He dismisses Giant with a wave of the hand.

GIANT
We'll get that money. I'm gonna put that Georgetown full court pressure defense on ya ass. We're getting what we deserve.

ANGLE - STAGE

The band finishes the song.

CLOSE - GIANT

He watches from the back and applauds.

18 EXT: BROOKLYN BRIDGE - NIGHT

Bleek is playing his horn on the walkway of the Brooklyn Bridge. It's a beautiful Manhattan skyline that listens to his horn. He nods to the occasional jogger who runs by.

19 EXT: STREET - NIGHT

Bleek is coming down the block when he sees Indigo.

ANGLE - STOOP

Bleek kisses her.

BLEEK
We had a great night. The cats were kickin' ass and takin' names, wish you coulda been there.

INDIGO
I'm glad it went well, but you know how I feel about clubs, all that smoke, it's not my thing. I'd rather sit home and listen to your records than be bothered by all those people.

Bleek is somewhat put off by this.

BLEEK
What are you saying?

INDIGO
You know I love your music, but I don't like sitting up in some club. That's all.

BLEEK
Forget about it.
(he puts the key in the door and opens it)
C'mon in.

20 INT: LOFT - NIGHT

BLEEK
Help yourself to the kitchen.

INDIGO
It's too late to eat for me.

Bleek walks in a circle around Indigo who's lying down on the sofa.

CLOSE - INDIGO

She watches him.

CLOSE - BLEEK

He plays his trumpet as he circles her.

CLOSE - INDIGO

INDIGO
You say music is your everything. What would happen if you couldn't play any more? God forbid.

ANGLE - BLEEK

Bleek stops dead in his tracks.

CLOSE - BLEEK'S MOUTH

In SLOW MOTION he takes the trumpet out of his mouth.

ANGLE - BLEEK

BLEEK
I guess I would curl up in a corner and die.

ANGLE - INDIGO

INDIGO
In that case, let's get on our knees and pray right now.

They both laugh.

HIGH ANGLE

Bleek puts the trumpet back in his mouth and circles Indigo once again as she begins to nod to the soothing sound of his trumpet.

WE CRANE DOWN into a CLOSE UP of a now-sleeping Indigo.

FADE OUT.

FADE IN:

21 INT: COFFEE SHOP - MORNING

Giant sits at the counter and opens up the New York Post and turns directly to the baseball scores.

CLOSE - GIANT

He scans the scores.

GIANT
Fuck.

He gets up.

ANGLE - PHONE BOOTH

Giant dials.

GIANT
Yeah, I can read.

PETEY (VO)
Can you count? Cuz you owe. What are you gonna do?

GIANT
I can get the money.

PETEY (VO)
Ya way over as it is.

GIANT
And people in hell want ice water. Tell me something I don't know already.

PETEY (VO)
It's your dance.

GIANT
Gimme the Mets, Twins, Reds, Pirates, Cubs, Astros, Tribe, A's, Red Sox, Blue Jays and da Angels.

PETEY (VO)
The full schedule? How much?

GIANT
Five hundred on each.

PETEY (VO)
You're a big boy.

GIANT
Out.

CLOSE - PHONE

He slams the phone down.

22 EXT: BLEEK'S LOFT - MORNING

Giant pushes the intercom.

CLOSE - GIANT

He looks up at the window, then pushes the intercom again.

BLEEK (VO)
Who?

GIANT
Giant.

Bleek buzzes him in.

23 INT: LOFT - MORNING

Bleek is in his pajamas with horn in hand.

GIANT
My main man.

BLEEK
No, you can't borrow any money from me.

GIANT
Hold up! Did I say anything 'bout borrowing some money from you? Did I?

BLEEK
I've known you since third grade.

GIANT
This is true, but that's not the nature of this visit, my brother.

BLEEK
Do you pray?

GIANT
Only when I need a winner. Like now.

BLEEK
That's messed up. I pray every morning.

GIANT
About what?

BLEEK
A lot of things.

GIANT
Like what?

BLEEK
For one thing, I ask God to deliver me daily from Anger, Lust, Ego and Attachment.

GIANT
Three out of four ain't bad.

They both laugh.

BLEEK
I never said I was an angel.

GIANT
How's Big Stop?

BLEEK
Good. He was over here yesterday. Your parents?

GIANT
Still keeping on.

BLEEK
I used to think the day my mother passed was the saddest day in my life.

GIANT
What happened?

BLEEK
It was a good day.

GIANT
You lost me.

BLEEK
It's only because of her death that I'm doing what I'm doing.

GIANT
So it was kind of a sacrifice.

BLEEK
That's what I'm saying.

GIANT
You are strange. Let me add some gravity to the situation.

BLEEK
The word is levity.

GIANT
That too.
(he laughs)
I asked Moe and Josh for more money. They wouldn't budge. But I'm working on it. Something else came up. Y'know Sade.

BLEEK
Yeah.

GIANT
Y'know Donald Fagen? Steely Dan? Bad White boy.

BLEEK
He's cool.

GIANT
He wrote this song for her and they're in the studio now and want you to play on it.

BLEEK
That's hip ... But I can't do it. I don't do pop.

GIANT
This isn't pop. Do you want to be in "Beneath the Underdog" all your life? Slaving for Moe and Josh? Hell, no. Y'know what Mike Tyson says? To get ass you gotta bring ass. That shit is true.

BLEEK
I'm not doing it. Give the gig to Shadow, he wants to be a rock n' roll star, anyway.

GIANT
Bleek, I think you're making a mistake, but I respect your decision. Once the train leaves, that's it, and if you're on the wrong track, forget it. <u>All aboard</u>.

24 INT: SHADOW'S CONDO - DAY

Shadow, unlike the rest of the band members, lives in Manhattan on the Upper West Side overlooking the Hudson River.

SHADOW
Donald Fagen wants me to play on a date with Sade today.

GIANT
I shit you not.

SHADOW
Midget, the shit is they wanted Bleek first, he refused so you're asking me.

GIANT
So what if you're second banana. Do you want the motherfucking gig or not?

SHADOW
I want to play soprano.

GIANT
Fine.

SHADOW
Sade is a fine motherfucker too. I loves me some Sade.

GIANT
Just be there on time.

SHADOW
Fine as she is, I won't be late.

GIANT
Good. I'm booking.

SHADOW
Wait up. I need your help.

Giant follows Shadow into his bedroom.

25 INT: BEDROOM - DAY

SHADOW
Should I change the sheets?

GIANT
If they need changing.

SHADOW
I was bonin' this babe and my woman always bust me. Do you smell perfume.

GIANT
Shadow, you've lost your mind.

SHADOW
This is some serious shit. Do you smell perfume?

GIANT
No.

SHADOW
Smell the sheets.

Giant smells the sheets.

GIANT
Smells alright to me.

SHADOW
I don't know why I'm asking you anyway. She has a highly developed sense of smell, can sniff me out five miles away. No joke. Sometimes I think she must be part canine and shit. She also counts my rubbers.

GIANT
Naw.

SHADOW
I swear on my mother. She keeps an accurate count, was an accounting major in school. So I gotta go out and buy some before she bust me again. One time I ran around the city a whole day trying to get a blue box of Trojans. She knows everything.

GIANT
Why go through all that?

SHADOW
Number one: I love her. Number two: She's a mother-fucker in bed. Number three: She's got the body of life.

GIANT
Three good reasons.

SMASH CUT TO:

26 INT: RECORDING STUDIO

Shadow playing soprano next to SADE, who's singing.

ANGLE - BOOTH

DONALD FAGAN sits next to the engineer.

CLOSE - SHADOW

Shadow plays his ass off as his eyes are fixed on Sade; he feels she's singing to/for him only.

27 INT: BEDROOM - NIGHT

Bleek and Clarke are in bed, having just finished a session of the "Mo' Better."

CLARKE
Roll over.

Bleek rolls on his stomach. Clarke begins to search, inspect his back for bumps to pop. She gets one.

BLEEK
Ouch.

CLARKE
Ooo! That was a good one.

BLEEK
That hurt.

CLARKE
Be still.

BLEEK
How's your voice lessons?

CLARKE
Good. I think I'm ready.

BLEEK
Ready! It takes years, not months.

CLARKE
Ready to accompany the band for a song at "The Dog."

Bleek doesn't say anything.

CLARKE (contd)
You think I'm not ready.

BLEEK
Just because we -- see each other, that has nothing to do with the music. At best you're an OK singer with potential to be good. We can't, I can't compromise my shit.

Clarke is hurt, but it's the truth.

CLARKE
Thanks for nothing.

BLEEK
I don't mean to be cruel, but if we were married it would be the same deal.

Clarke finds another bump and squeezes the hell out of it.

BLEEK (contd)
Shit.

CLARKE
Look, nobody is asking you or anybody else for any handouts.
(MORE)

CLARKE (contd)
Everyone needs a break. I thought you might be that person. Shoot me, I was wrong. I'm finished.

Bleek turns back over.

CLARKE (contd)
A lot of people say I'm a very good singer.

BLEEK
Good, go sing with them, not me.

CLARKE
Forget you. I still believe in myself.

BLEEK
You're supposed to.

CLARKE
Shadow says I can be a star.

BLEEK
I bet he did.

28 INT: LOFT - NIGHT

Bleek is sitting at the piano with just his boxer shorts on.

CLOSE - BLEEK

His eyes are closed.

ANGLE - BLEEK

He plays several chords. WE ARE WATCHING Bleek composing. He chooses to do this on the piano instead of the trumpet.

CLOSE - BLEEK

He opens his eyes, takes the pencil from between his teeth and ...

CLOSE - MUSIC PAPER

... writes the notes down.

ANGLE - BEDROOM DOOR

Clarke stands there with his Georgetown tank top on and WE DOLLY with her to Bleek at the piano.

ANGLE - BLEEK AND CLARKE

She puts her hands on his neck and begins to massage it.

BLEEK
That feels very good, but please stop. I gotta get this idea down. It just came in.

CLARKE
You never let me play.

BLEEK
Let me get this down first.

EXTREME CLOSE UP - BLEEK'S EAR

Clarke puts her tongue in and around his ear.

CLARKE (OS)
Does it tickle?

BLEEK (OS)
Yes.

CLOSE - CLARKE

CLARKE
Let me leave the artist at work alone. The muse is visiting and Bleek is truly inspired. Then he will share his newest, latest gift to the world. Hallelujah.

As Clarke rambles on with her sarcastic speech, we fade down her sound, as Bleek does the same.

CLOSE - BLEEK

He tunes her out.

BLEEK (VO)
The day you say to a woman, "I can't live without you" is the day she says, "Prove it. Prove it by loving only me. Don't love your work or anything else as much as me."

CLOSE - CLARKE

Her mouth is moving but we can't hear what she's saying. We hear instead:

BLEEK (VO)
No woman can respect you after you say there's nothing more to your life than what you have with her.

CLOSE - BLEEK

He's playing the piano.

CLOSE - CLARKE

We begin to fade up on her sound.

CLARKE
I'm outta here.

ANGLE - PIANO

Clarke leaves.

HIGH ANGLE - LOFT

Clarke goes back into the bedroom and slams the door while Bleek continues to write his song.

29 INT: REHEARSAL SPACE - DAY

The band is about to begin to rehearse. Everyone is there except Left Hand.

ANGLE - ROOM

Bleek hands out the parts; this is the song Bleek was composing in the previous scene.

BLEEK
This is something that came in last night.

ANGLE - BOTTOM

He holds his part out in front of him and reads the title.

BOTTOM
"Pop Top 40 R n' B Urban Contemporary Easy Listening Funk Love."

CLOSE - RHYTHM

RHYTHM
Bleek, you always come up with some <u>OUT</u> shit.

CLOSE - SHADOW

He stares at the music in front of him and he's not impressed.

SHADOW
Fuck this. Let's talk about the money.

GIANT
What about the money?

BLEEK
What about the money?

SHADOW
We want more.

GIANT
Are you the spokesperson for everyone?

SHADOW
Yeah.

GIANT
Even for Left Hand, who's late again?

SHADOW
Yep. We've been packing 'em in at "The Dog," Moe and Josh are making cash dollars. Where's our cut?

GIANT
I'm talking to them now.

BLEEK
He's working on it.

SHADOW
Maybe we need new management. Somebody who can get the terms we want.

GIANT
Fuck you.

BLEEK
Giant's in. Shadow, you fail to realize this is my band. When you're running shit then you can do what you want.

SHADOW
Won't be long from now.

BLEEK
Good, but until that majestical day happens, you do what the hell I say.

SHADOW
The midget should go.

ANGLE - DOOR

Left Hand rushes in.

LEFT HAND
Sorry I'm late.

BLEEK
And the same shit goes for you, Left Hand. You show up late one more time and your shit is over.

He hands him his part.

LEFT HAND
Sorry! I won't be late again.

GIANT
I know plenty of piano players who want your gig.

CLOSE - BLEEK

BLEEK
Let's walk through this.

ANGLE - ROOM

The quintet begins to learn the parts to "Pop Top 40 R n' B Contemporary Easy Listening Funk Love." Periodically they stop, ask questions and Bleek answers how he wants it to be played.

Shadow continuously messes up and every time this happens Bleek stops him, makes the corrections and they begin again.

CLOSE - BLEEK

He's listening intently, waiting for Shadow to fuck up.

CLOSE - SHADOW

Shadow plays.

CLOSE - BLEEK

Shadow fucks up.

BLEEK
Goddammit, Shadow. How many times do we gotta go over that bar? You got the motherfucking music in front of you. Read it.

CLOSE - SHADOW

SHADOW
This note feels better. I tried what you wrote, this sounds better to me.
(he plays)

CLOSE - BLEEK

BLEEK
Why don't you go outside, play what you want, all you want. We'll wait. Then when you're finished, come back and play what I wrote. Read the notes. It's my music! It's my band. Everybody got that?

CLOSE - RHYTHM

RHYTHM
Yeah.

CLOSE - BOTTOM

BOTTOM
Cool.

CLOSE - LEFT HAND

LEFT HAND
Uh huh.

CLOSE - BLEEK

BLEEK
Shadow.

CLOSE - SHADOW

SHADOW
It's your band.

CLOSE - BLEEK

BLEEK
From the top. One. Two. Three.

ANGLE - ROOM

The quintet tries it again.

SMASH CUT TO:

30 INT: "BENEATH THE UNDERDOG" - NIGHT

The band performs "Pop Top 40 R n' B Urban Contemporary Easy Listening Funk Love." Unlike the rehearsal, they are up on it, and it's a killer.

ANGLE - PHONE BOOTH

Giant closes the door to the phone booth so he can talk over the band's music. He dials.

GIANT
Yeah. I can read.

PETEY (VO)
Giant, you're making me look bad. When I look bad, I don't like it.

GIANT
I'll get you your money.

PETEY (VO)
I don't care how you get it, just get it soon.

Petey hangs up.

GIANT
Petey. Don't hang up on me.

ANGLE - STAGE

The group finishes the song, the members acknowledge the applause.

CLOSE - BLEEK

BLEEK
Shadow, that's the way to play it.

CLOSE - SHADOW

Shadow looks at him.

31 INT: "BENEATH THE UNDERDOG" OFFICE - NIGHT

Bleek stands in the middle of the office.

BLEEK
I'm not happy at all. When I'm not happy, I don't play good. When I don't play good, the music sounds like doo-doo. When the music sounds like doo-doo, nobody comes. We all lose money.

MOE
Bleek, you're a great talent, but you've got a lot of dead weight around your neck, dragging you down. That so-called manager of yours, Giant, that's a joke. He couldn't manage a little league team. When you're ready for some real management, then come see me. I gotta first cousin. He's top shelf. Handles only the best. Everything first-class, all the way. Just like me and Josh, first-class. Filet mignon.

JOSH
Dom Perignon. First-class.

BLEEK
I didn't come here to speak about my management. I came here to speak about the great sums of money you two are making off my music and the little I see in return.

MOE
You are mistaken, cuz you're talking 'bout management. Giant, your manager was the one who negotiated this deal. One you agreed to.

JOSH
And it's always been our business policy to never ever ...

MOE
ever never ...

JOSH
renegotiate the deal.

Bleek is stuck.

BLEEK
I've known him since third grade.

JOSH
That's not our concern.

MOE
Nobody's asking you not to be his friend. That's fine. We all need close friends.

JOSH
But this is business.

BLEEK
I trust him. He's honest. I can't say that about you, Moe, or your first-class cousin.

MOE
Nobody can be trusted. Everyone steals. Everyone is crooked. The trick is to walk out of the deal with as much of your shirt on as possible.

BLEEK
Y'know what that sounds like?

They don't answer.

BLEEK (contd)
Like the long, long history of Black artists being exploited.

MOE
Everybody exploits everybody.

BLEEK
I bet.

JOSH
It's not about Black or White.

MOE
It'd about da money.

CLOSE - BLEEK

He realizes he's dealing with two sharks.

CLOSE - MOE

MOE
In real life.

CLOSE - BLEEK

BLEEK
Giant is still my man.

CLOSE - MOE

MOE
Shoot yourself.

CLOSE - BLEEK

BLEEK
And my money?

CLOSE - JOSH

JOSH
We have a binding contract.

CLOSE - MOE

MOE
In real life.

ANGLE - STAGE

Butterbean is going through his act and the audience is dying.

ANGLE - GIANT

Giant stands at the bar laughing at Butterbean. The person standing next to him is smoking away.

GIANT
Hey, I'm allergic to smoke.
Do me a solid.

The guy still continues to smoke.

Giant moves on.

ANGLE - CLUB

Giant sees Indigo and Clarke come in at the same time. By the way they look at each other you can see they've had static before.

32 INT: DRESSING ROOM - NIGHT

GIANT
Bleek, can I see ya for a second.

ANGLE - HALLWAY

GIANT
Both Indigo and Clarke just walked in.

BLEEK
Were they together?

GIANT
Didn't look like it.

BLEEK
No sweat.

GIANT
You got it?

BLEEK
It's cool. Giant ... good looking out.

GIANT
That's what managers are for.

33 INT: "BENEATH THE UNDERDOG" - NIGHT
ANGLE - TABLE

Shadow pulls up a chair behind Clarke.

SHADOW
I don't know what you see in Bleek.

Clarke stares at him.

SHADOW (contd)
Alright. Alright, I admit he's a good cat and everything, but somebody else, like me, could treat you the way you're supposed to be treated.

CLOSE - BLEEK

He surveys the club.

ANGLE - HIS POV

He sees Shadow all over Clarke.

CLOSE - BLEEK

ANGLE - DIFFERENT POV

He also sees Indigo across the way and makes a beeline for her.

ANGLE - TABLE

Bleek pulls up a chair behind Indigo and kisses her.

BLEEK
What a pleasant surprise.

INDIGO
A big surprise.

BLEEK
How so?

INDIGO
You pissed in your pants when you saw me, especially since you invited Clarke.

BLEEK
The surprise is seeing you here after you telling me how much you hate clubs.

INDIGO
I had a sudden change of heart.

BLEEK
I'm happy you're here.

INDIGO
But is she happy?

Indigo points to Clarke.

ANGLE - CLARKE AND SHADOW

Shadow is pressing her.

SHADOW
I've heard you sing. I want to put you out in front, unlike Bleek.

CLOSE - CLARKE

All this time she hasn't said a word.

CLOSE - SHADOW

SHADOW
I understand you can't make that move now, it's chill. But remember what I said. All Bleek cares about is Bleek.

CLOSE - CLARKE

Shadow has hit a nerve. She responds.

CLARKE
Is that so?

SHADOW
So it is. Anything, anyone that might overshadow him, he blocks. Like myself.

CLOSE - CLARKE

She nods.

ANGLE - HER POV

Clarke spots Bleek sitting, talking to Indigo.

SHADOW (OS)
Clarke, I'd be the last person on earth to turn you against your man, but promise me you start to look and listen.

CLOSE - SHADOW

SHADOW
Promise?

CLOSE - CLARKE

CLARKE
Promise.

ANGLE - TABLE

Shadow gets up and leaves just as Bleek approaches them.

CLOSE - BLEEK

He looks at Shadow.

CLOSE - SHADOW

He smiles back.

ANGLE - TABLE

Bleek sits down.

BLEEK
You should watch the company you keep.

CLARKE
I could say the same for you.

She motions towards Indigo who is staring right back.

BLEEK
Enjoy the set.

34 INT: BACKSTAGE - NIGHT

Bleek follows Shadow.

CLOSE - BLEEK

BLEEK
Shadow.

ANGLE - SHADOW

He stops.

CLOSE - BLEEK

BLEEK
Too many people have died behind some drawers. If you would like to talk to Clarke, feel free. I have no claims on anybody. I don't own nobody but myself.

CLOSE - SHADOW

He shakes his head and walks away.

35 INT: BLEEK'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Bleek and Clarke this time are making love. This sequence will be a jumble, a COLLAGE of EXTREME, EXTREME CLOSE UPS of parts of intertwined bodies. The intertwined parts are legs, arms, feet, toes, hands and fingers.

CLOSE - BLEEK

He looks at Clarke.

ANGLE - HIS POV

Clarke stares at him.

CLOSE - BLEEK'S MOUTH

His mouth kisses her lips; when he finishes and moves away, WE SEE those lips belong to Indigo, not Clarke.

CLOSE - CLARKE

Clarke looks at Bleek.

The following sequence Bleek makes love to Indigo and Clarke at different times that is made up of a bunch of JUMP CUTS. In this flurry of CUTS, Indigo and Clarke become blurred, they become one and the same.

CLOSE - CLARKE

smells his neck.

CLOSE - INDIGO

smells his hair.

CLOSE - CLARKE

begins to tickle his underarms.

CLOSE - BLEEK

BLEEK
Indigo, that tickles.

Oops. He fucked up.

CLOSE - CLARKE

CLARKE
What did you call me?

CLOSE - BLEEK

BLEEK
I called you your name.

CLOSE - CLARKE

CLARKE
The hell you did. I ain't deaf. Motherfucker, you called me Indigo.

CLOSE - INDIGO

INDIGO
Bleek, how in the fuck could you call me her name. Here we are, making love. I'm in your bed, Indigo, not Clarke.

CLOSE - CLARKE

CLARKE
I said Indigo, not Clarke.

CLOSE - INDIGO

INDIGO
I've had it. And you say you love me.

CLOSE - BLEEK

BLEEK
I never said that.

CLOSE - INDIGO

INDIGO
You did too.

CLOSE - BLEEK

BLEEK
Well, I don't remember it.

CLOSE - CLARKE

CLARKE
Do you remember saying you care?

CLOSE - BLEEK

BLEEK
Now that I remember.

CLOSE - CLARKE

CLARKE
If you say you care for me, why in the fuck are you still fucking Indigo?

CLOSE - BLEEK

What can he say.

CLOSE - INDIGO

INDIGO
I'm waiting.

CLOSE - BLEEK

He looks at the ceiling.

CLOSE - CLARKE

CLARKE
Why can't you look into my eyes? Why can't you? That's where the true me is. Is it too real for you?

CUT TO:

CLOSE - INDIGO

INDIGO
You always avoid direct eye contact. Or is it something in you I might see, the real you?

CUT TO:

CLOSE - CLARKE

CLARKE
Think about that?

CLOSE - BLEEK

He's struggling with something to say, something to explain himself. He has to do something because he's literally and figuratively being blasted from both sides.

CLOSE - BLEEK

BLEEK
The largest part of my heart is already taken, and if you can hang with that knowledge, fine. If not, let's not pretend. Let's not waste precious time. Life is too short.

CLOSE - CLARKE

She looks at Bleek.

CLARKE
Let's not pretend anymore.

CUT TO:

CLOSE - INDIGO

INDIGO
Life is too short. Our life together is over.

CLOSE - BLEEK

He has nothing else to say. He picks up his trumpet and begins to play.

CLOSE - CLARKE

Clarke gets out of the bed.

CLOSE - BLEEK

He plays.

CLOSE - INDIGO

Indigo gets out of the bed.

36 EXT: PROSPECT PARK - DAY

Giant and Bleek are riding through the park doing laps on their ten-speed bikes.

37 EXT: GAZEBO - DAY

Bleek and Giant, both exhausted, sit down with the bikes under the gazebo which is on the lake.

BLEEK
Midget, you're doing a doo-doo job. You're fucking up. It's shit. Ca-ca.

GIANT
Why you wanna call me Midget? You OK'd the deal. You told me to get you into "The Dog" and I did. I got us the best terms we could get. The understanding was to get it on the back in, down the line.

BLEEK
This is down the line.

GIANT
And I'm working on it.

BLEEK
Not hard enough. Sometimes I think you're cheating me.

Giant is hurt.

GIANT
How can you say that? That hurts to the quick. We grew up together. I'd rather chop off my left hand than cheat you. You're my boy. I'm your boy. You've saved my black ass on many a times.

BLEEK
Don't forget it.

GIANT
I'm breaking my fucking neck for you. Do I look like I'm getting rich offa you? There ain't no serious money in jazz, not crazy, stupid money. But I love you. I love the music. Somebody's been talkin' to you.

BLEEK
Nobody's talkin'.

GIANT
Bullshit. I gotta grapevine also.

BLEEK
All I'm saying is you gotta do a better job. It's about more than friendship.

GIANT
How many ass-whippings have you saved me from?

BLEEK
Too many to remember.

GIANT
You ain't lying.

BLEEK
One day I won't be around to save you. You're gonna have to take that ass-kicking.

GIANT
Let's break.

They get on their bikes.

GIANT (contd)
Can I get a loan?

BLEEK
Are you betting again?

GIANT
It's under control. What about the loan?

BLEEK
How much?

Giant is hesitant to say the amount.

BLEEK (contd)
Whew! That much. Can't help you.

GIANT
Didn't hurt to ask.

HIGH ANGLE - GAZEBO

Bleek and Giant ride off.

38 EXT: STREET - DAY

Bleek and Giant ride down the street and Giant turns the corner.

ANGLE - GIANT

GIANT
Later.

ANGLE - BLEEK

He waves.

BLEEK
Tonight.

ANGLE - STREET

Giant is coming down the block when he's almost hit from behind by a car. He swerves out of the way and continues to ride. The car continues to stay right on his tail and Giant realizes this isn't an accident.

ANGLE - GIANT

He switches gears and turns down another street against traffic.

ANGLE - CAR

The car is in pursuit, wrong way, against traffic and all.

ANGLE - GIANT

He flies down the block.

ANGLE - STREET

A kid on a skateboard is coming directly towards Giant. He jumps off when he sees Giant and the car. The skateboard flies under Giant's tire.

ANGLE - GIANT

He's airborne, flies up and over a car and smashes into the sidewalk.

ANGLE - SIDEWALK

The two men, ROD and MADLOCK, drag a bloodied, dazed but conscious Giant into their car.

ANGLE - CAR

They speed away.

39 INT: CAR - DAY

The driver, Rod, remains silent as Madlock holds Giant up in the back seat.

MADLOCK
We're not gonna kill you. We don't believe in killing our brothers and sisters. But we gotta do something.
(he grabs Giant's left hand)
It's only right.

Madlock methodically breaks all of Giant's five fingers on his left hand. Even his screams can't drown out the snapping, the cracking of his bones. Once he's finished, he gives Giant his hand back.

MADLOCK (contd)
Are we gonna get our money?

GIANT
Yes.

MADLOCK
Yes only means something after you've said no.

GIANT
You'll get your money.

MADLOCK
We're gonna be nice and drop you off at Brooklyn Hospital, get your hand fixed.

40 INT: CLASSROOM - DAY

Indigo is in front of her third-grade class, teaching. It's an inner-city school so you know all the kids are Black or Puerto Rican.

ANGLE - INDIGO

INDIGO
Who likes music?

ANGLE - CLASS

They all respond, "I do. I do," raise their hands.

CLOSE - INDIGO

INDIGO
Where does music come from?

CLOSE - SHANIKA

SHANIKA
Music comes from people.

CLOSE - INDIGO

INDIGO
Good answer, Shanika. Let me make the question clearer. How is music made?

CLOSE - BENNY

BENNY
From instruments, Miss Downes.

SNGLE - INDIGO

INDIGO
That's right. Today I brought in some instruments. As I hold
(MORE)

INDIGO (contd)
them up, I want you to call out the name. You don't have to raise your hand; if you think you know it just call it out.

She holds up a violin.

CLASS (OS)
Violin.

She holds up a flute.

ANGLE - CLASS

CLASS
Flute.

DIFFERENT ANGLE - CLASS

CLASS
Guitar.

CLOSE - INDIGO

INDIGO
This is my favorite musical instrument.

Indigo holds up a trumpet.

CLOSE - SHANIKA

SHANIKA
Trumpet.

SMASH CUT TO:

CLOSE - BLEEK

Bleek is blowing away, a man and his horn.

CUT TO:

41 INT: REHEARSAL SPACE - DAY

Clarke is taking her voice lessons from a rotund Black woman, MRS. PEARL.

CLOSE - MRS. PEARL

She sits at the upright piano and instructs Clarke.

MRS. PEARL
The voice is also an instrument, yes it is. And it should be treated as such. It's closest to the trumpet, at least mine is. Once again.

ANGLE - CLARKE

Clarke does her voice exercises. She can really sing.

42 INT: CLASSROOM - DAY
ANGLE - INDIGO

INDIGO
Class, let's sing the song Mr. Bleek Gilliam wrote for you.

ANGLE - THE CLASS

The class sings.

CUT TO:

43 INT: LOFT - DAY

The children's singing continues as Bleek plays along with them.

CUT TO:

44 INT: REHEARSAL SPACE - DAY

The sound of the children singing and Bleek playing continues as Clarke comes in with voice exercises which fit in perfectly.

CUT TO:

45 INT: CLASSROOM - DAY

The class sings.

CUT TO:

46 INT: LOFT - DAY

Bleek plays.

CUT TO:

47 INT: REHEARSAL SPACE - DAY

Clarke ends the song.

CLOSE - MRS. PEARL

MRS. PEARL
Very good.

48 INT: LOFT - NIGHT

Big Stop, who's a great cook, is preparing a big feast for the band, their dates and an assortment of Bleek's friends, colleagues and fellow artists.

ANGLE - KITCHEN

Big Stop is busy at work, kicking people who are "starvin' like Marvin" out of the kitchen.

BIG STOP
Get out of the kitchen. Don't mess with me while I'm working. Food will be ready soon enough.

ANGLE - DOOR

Giant walks in with his left hand in a huge cast. Everyone gathers around him.

RITA
Poor baby, what happened?

GIANT
Fell off my bike.

BLEEK
When did that happen?

GIANT
Right after I left you.

BLEEK
That's a drag.

CORA
You gonna be alright?

GIANT
Good as new.

A crowd is still around Giant as they further inquire about the injury. Giant is all of a sudden beginning to like all of the attention.

ANGLE - SHADOW

He watches this in amusement.

ANGLE - HIS POV

People all over Giant.

CLOSE - SHADOW

SHADOW
Hey, Midget. I told you 'bout sticking your hand in the cookie jar.

CLOSE - GIANT

GIANT
Actually, ya moms got raw and crossed her thighs too quick.

ANGLE - PEOPLE

PEOPLE
Oooo!

CLOSE - GIANT

He laughs.

CLOSE - SHADOW

SHADOW
Alright, ya gonna need another cast, keep fucking around.

CLOSE - GIANT

GIANT
You started it.

CLOSE - BLEEK

BLEEK
Shut up or take this outside.

ANGLE - KITCHEN

BIG STOP
Food's ready.

The confrontation is quickly forgotten about, folks is hungry and they line up to be served.

ANGLE - BLEEK AND GIANT

BLEEK
I don't believe your story.

GIANT
I hit a skateboard.

BLEEK
Still don't believe it.

ANGLE - CORNER

Rhythm and Bottom sit in a corner devouring Big Stop's giant shrimp Creole gumbo. The following exchange should be done in the style of the old Black minstrel acts.

RHYTHM
Y'know my lady Lucindy?

BOTTOM
The one with the big ...

RHYTHM
Not her, the one with the little ...

BOTTOM
Oh, her.

RHYTHM
Tomorrow is her birthday and I want to get her something really nice. Like a ...

BOTTOM
No, not that. How about a ...

RHYTHM
She hates them.

BOTTOM
Too bad. How 'bout a dress?

RHYTHM
My man. One of those sexy little foxy ...

BOTTOM
Naw, too tight. Get her one of those loose ...

RHYTHM
Too big. The in-between one, not too tight, not too loose.

BOTTOM
That'll work. I just bought one myself for ...

RHYTHM
Thought you got rid ...

BOTTOM
That was Vicky, her best friend. Dress will cost you around ...

RHYTHM
That's too much money. I can't afford it. I got to get a dress that costs no more than ...

BOTTOM
Can't get it that cheap.

RHYTHM
I'll buy her a less expensive dress, also take her out to dinner.

BOTTOM
Good idea. We should go out together, a double date.

RHYTHM
Bet. But I heard ya girl is a wild ...

BOTTOM
That's her second cousin, who's married to Lil' Love.

RHYTHM
Oh. Because on our first date we did the ...

BOTTOM
No, you didn't.

RHYTHM
Yes we did.

BOTTOM
I heard different. Thought that was ...

RHYTHM
Not that time.

BOTTOM
So when are you coming to pick us up?

RHYTHM
Around ...

BOTTOM
Too early ...

RHYTHM
Then what about ...

BOTTOM
Too late. Maybe around ...

RHYTHM
Perfect.

BOTTOM
That's what I like about you and me. We compliment each other like the drums and the bass.

ANGLE - BLEEK

Bleek is holding court.

BLEEK
I'm convinced Black folks are ignorant. We just plain are. I sick and tired of playing before everybody but my own people. They don't come out. We don't support our own. If Black artists, if I had to rely on niggers to eat, I'd starve to death. Jazz is our music, but we don't support it. It's sad but true.

ANGLE - LEFT HAND AND CONNIE

Left Hand and Connie are eating together, enjoying themselves.

CONNIE
Honey, will you get me a glass of wine. Thank you.

Left Hand gets up.

JUMP CUT TO:

SAME ANGLE

CONNIE
Honey, will you get me a napkin, please.

Left Hand gets up.

JUMP CUT TO:

SAME ANGLE

CONNIE
Honey, will you get another fork. This one just dropped.

Left Hand gets up.

ANGLE - BUTTERBEAN, RITA AND CORA

Butterbean, who has had a few drinks, is getting loose and openly flirts with Rita and Cora.

ANGLE - BIG STOP

Big Stop is rapping hard to a very pretty woman who is at least fifty years his junior.

Bleek interrupts him.

BLEEK
Daddy, let me show you something? Excuse us.

Bleek leads his father back into the kitchen.

ANGLE - KITCHEN

BLEEK
You are seventy-five years old. Daddy, you've earned the right to do whatever you please, but leave the teenagers alone.

BIG STOP
Is she that young?

BLEEK
Yes. She would probably give you a massive coronary.

BIG STOP
Doubt it. You better pray you can do what I can at my young age.

JUMP CUT TO:

49 EXT: BLEEK'S LOFT - MORNING

Bleek and Big Stop are having their morning ritual of catch.

CLOSE - BLEEK

BLEEK
What can you do? You're seventy-five years old.

CLOSE - BIG STOP

BIG STOP
Don't ever bet against me. I'm still ya father and I'm still healthy. Who taught you everything you know?

CLOSE - BLEEK

BLEEK
You did.

CLOSE - BIG STOP

BIG STOP
Alright then. Who taught you how to satisfy a woman?

CLOSE - BLEEK

BLEEK
You did.

CLOSE - BIG STOP

BIG STOP
How to always hold a little something back so they'll always come back for more.

CLOSE - BLEEK

BLEEK
Daddy, it was you.

CLOSE - BIG STOP

BIG STOP
Goddamn right it was me. Who taught you to gently suck a soft, sweet, lucious, tender nipple like a newborn baby being breast-fed for the very first time by his loving mother?

CLOSE - BLEEK

BLEEK
I learned that myself.

CLOSE - BIG STOP

BIG STOP
The hell you did. It was I. I'm ya daddy. Big Stop Gilliam. I brought ya rusty, crusty black ass into this world, along with your mother, God bless her soul. We gave you your life, your seed. Boy, the night you were conceived your mother jumped my bones after the game.

CLOSE - BLEEK

He stops his throw.

CLOSE - BIG STOP

BIG STOP
Boy, you were conceived in a segregated Pullman sleeping car. Somewhere on the tracks between St. Louis and Chicago.

CLOSE - BLEEK

He walks towards his father.

BLEEK
You never told me that.

ANGLE - BLEEK AND BIG STOP

BIG STOP
You never asked. You got to remember to always ask the right question.

BLEEK
Daddy, will there ever be a time when I'm your equal and not just your son?

BIG STOP
No.

They both laugh.

50 EXT: STREET - DAY

Giant is walking down the street; he's cautious. He quickly turns around to see anybody walking up behind him.

51 EXT: GIANT'S APARTMENT BUILDING - DAY

As Giant turns the corner, he sees a car parked across the street from his building. It's not Madlock and Rod in it, but two more HOODS. Giant slowly makes an about-face.

CLOSE - GIANT

WE ARE CLOSE ON Giant's frim face as WE DOLLY with him down the block. His shit looks bleak.

52 INT: "BENEATH THE UNDERDOG" - NIGHT

The quintet in onstage, and Bleek moves to the microphone.

CLOSE - BLEEK

BLEEK
No matter what you do in music, sooner or later, eventually you're gonna come back to the blues.

ANGLE - STAGE
The band begins to play underneath Bleek.

CLOSE - BLEEK

BLEEK
We all know what the blues is? Right?

ANGLE - AUDIENCE

AUDIENCE
Right.

CLOSE - BLEEK

BLEEK
I thought so. I knew you knew. This is the "Both of My Women Done Left Me" blues.

ANGLE - AUDIENCE

They laugh.

CLOSER - BLEEK

BLEEK
The "Double Blues."

ANGLE STAGE

Bleek joins the band with his muted trumpet. The music continues as WE FLASHBACK TO:

53 EXT: ROOF - DAY

It is a cool fall day and Bleek and Indigo are huddled up under a blanket.

BLEEK
Can you remember how you felt the first time you fell in love? Can you?

INDIGO
I don't remember.

BLEEK
Everyone remembers that. Anyway, I do. Didn't know what hit me. Bleek was the <u>original</u> fool in love. That shit was so pure, so innocent. She felt the same way too.

INDIGO
How recent was this?

BLEEK
In third grade.

INDIGO
Third grade! And I was worried.

BLEEK
One day after passing notes back and forth all week, we met at three o'clock in the schoolyard and kissed. When her lips touched mine I flew straight to heaven, never felt like that since.

INDIGO
Not even with me?

BLEEK
I'm not gonna lie. Ever since then I've been trying to regain that feeling.

Indigo gets out from under the blanket.

INDIGO
What are you saying?

BLEEK
I'm telling you something about me. All I hear from you is how I never communicate, don't open up to you.

INDIGO
Haven't you ever been close to the feeling?

BLEEK
With a woman?

INDIGO
No, with an elephant.

BLEEK
Only when I play my music.

INDIGO
I'm outta here.

BLEEK
Indigo.

INDIGO
Here we are, supposed to be lovers. I'm your woman and you tell me straight to my
(MORE)

INDIGO (contd)
face you've never been in love since you kissed some ponytail, skinny-leg girl in second grade.

BLEEK
Third grade.

INDIGO
Whatever, and I'm supposed not to be the least bit upset. No, I'm not upset. I'm fucking furious.

BLEEK
Why you gotta curse?

INDIGO
I'll curse up a motherfucking blue streak if my heart so desires. Motherfucker -- Shit -- Bastard -- Cocksucker -- Asshole ...

Indigo stops as she realizes how foolish she sounds. She's not really good with profanity. She laughs.

INDIGO (contd)
Why don't you try and find that third-grade girl, marry her and live happily ever after.

Bleek stands up, walks to Indigo and puts the blanket around the both of them.

CLOSE - BLEEK AND INDIGO

INDIGO
Bleek, I can only take so much.

CUT TO:

54 INT: "BENEATH THE UNDERDOG" - NIGHT
ANGLE - STAGE

The band finishes the song.

ANGLE - AUDIENCE

They applaud.

CLOSE - BLEEK

BLEEK
The blues.

He takes a bow.

ANGLE - GIANT

Giant is standing in the back, watching, when Eggy approaches him.

EGGY
Moe and Josh want to see ya now.

55 INT: "BENEATH THE UNDERDOG" - OFFICE

MOE
We heard about your accident.

Giant nods.

JOSH
We are truly concerned.

MOE
This is a small world and people talk. And a little birdie tells us you have amassed a pretty bundle of debts.

JOSH
Betting is illegal. Never bet once in my life. Leave nothing to chance.

GIANT
And out of the goodness of your heart you want to help me?

MOE
No. We want to help you help yourself, but also for our own selfish motives.

JOSH
We're honest businessmen.

GIANT
I got two things to say: We still want more money and I'm still Bleek's manager.

MOE
I'm sorry to hear both things.

GIANT
Tell your little birdie they might as well break both my legs cuz I don't think I can come up with that much.

JOSH
What doesn't come out in the wash comes out in the rinse.

Giant turns around and feigns a big limp as he leaves the office.

CLOSE - MOE AND JOSH

JOSH
These young Blacks are crazy.

56 EXT: BACK ALLEY - STAGE DOOR - NIGHT

Bleek says goodnight to Roberto and walks down the long, dark alley when Giant emerges from the shadows.

GIANT
Bleek.

BLEEK
Damn, you scared me.

GIANT
I need a place to stay.

BLEEK
For tonight?

GIANT
For awhile.

BLEEK
As long as you don't get in the way.

GIANT
My main man.

57 INT: BLEEK'S LOFT - NIGHT

GIANT
I talked to Moe and Josh again.

BLEEK
What happened?

GIANT
Not a damn thing.

BLEEK
It's time to get a real lawyer.

GIANT
I got one.

BLEEK
Who?

GIANT
My brother-in-law.

BLEEK
Your brother-in-law Moses?
Hell no.

GIANT
He's cheap.

BLEEK
Fuck dat. I'm fuckin' sick and tired of your fuckin' relatives. Your cousin the accountant, your uncle the plumber, your niece the dentist, my mouth is still fucked up behind that shit. I hate to tell you, but your family is fucked up.

GIANT
Hey, c'mon, Bleek.

BLEEK
I'm through with your relatives.

GIANT
They love you, always supported you.

BLEEK
Don't care.

GIANT
Alright, already. I'm here to do your bidding. That's my job.

Bleek picks up his trumpet and begins to finger it.

CLOSE - BLEEK

BLEEK
How much do you owe?

Giant doesn't want to say.

CLOSE - GIANT

GIANT
I'm afraid to say.

CLOSE - BLEEK

BLEEK
Write it down then.

He slides Giant a piece of paper.

ANGLE - BLEEK AND GIANT

Giant takes the pen and writes down the figure and slides it back to Bleek. Bleek falls back onto the sofa after reading it.

BLEEK
That much.

GIANT
Hit a bad luck streak.

BLEEK
Look, Giant, I'm gonna see how much I can raise, but you gotta get help, that means your gig is over. I've been contemplating about managing myself. I have to be in control.

Giant's face is frozen.

GIANT
Is that what you want?

BLEEK
That's what I want.

GIANT
You're cutting everybody off; me, Indigo, Clarke.

BLEEK
I'm not cutting off nobody. Just doing what's best for me. Besides, Indigo and Clarke left me.

GIANT
That ain't what I heard. Bleek, how long have we been friends?

BLEEK
Since third grade.

GIANT
Doesn't that count for anything?

BLEEK
It has! You would have been long gone before now.

GIANT
You've been that displeased?

BLEEK
Doesn't matter. Anyway, the offer still stands. You can stay here and I'll get you that money before you get yourself killed, but you gotta do something about that damn gambling.

GIANT
I know, Bleek. I'm sick. I'm sick.

DISSOLVE TO:

58 INT: LOFT - NIGHT

Giant is fast asleep on the sofa and WE DOLLY INTO Bleek's bedroom where he is dialing a number.

BLEEK
Hello.

INDIGO (VO)
Peace. I'm unable to come to the phone right now. Please leave a message after the tone.

CUT TO:

59 INT: INDIGO'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Indigo is preparing her lessons for tomorrow's class. She looks at the answering machine.

BLEEK (VO)
Indigo, this is me. Calling to see how you are doing. I miss you. Call me if and when you feel like it. Later.

CLOSE - INDIGO'S FACE

CUT TO:

60 INT: BLEEK'S BEDROOM - NIGHT
CLOSE - BLEEK

BLEEK
Clarke, this is Bleek. What's up?

CUT TO:

61 INT: CLARKE'S BEDROOM - NIGHT
CLOSE - CLARKE

BLEEK (VO)
Shadow says you're coming along great. Maybe I was wrong, you can sing. Haven't seen or heard from you in awhile, just checkin' in. Call me.

CUT TO:

62 INT: BLEEK'S BEDROOM
ANGLE - BLEEK

He hangs up the phone.

CLOSE - BLEEK

In SLOW MOTION Bleek puts the trumpet in his mouth.

SMASH CUT TO:

63 EXT: BROOKLYN BRIDGE - NIGHT

WE ARE TIGHT ON Bleek's mouth, then CRANE UP TO SEE a solitary figure practicing his trumpet and we

FADE OUT.

FADE IN:

64 EXT: BLEEK'S LOFT - MORNING

Bleek and Big Stop are playing catch.

CLOSE - BIG STOP

BIG STOP
So you finally got the sense to ask your daddy about some of all this knowledge I got.

CLOSE - BLEEK

BLEEK
Just answer the question.

CLOSE - BIG STOP

BIG STOP
You can't rush the knowledge. You wanna know which woman is for real.

CLOSE - BLEEK.

BLEEK
Daddy!

CLOSE - BIG STOP

BIG STOP
When a person gets to a certain level of accomplishment and people come into their life, you don't know whether it's because of their position, possessions or reputation, whatnot, or whether it's cuz of your character.

CLOSE - BLEEK

BLEEK
You saying it's character.

CLOSE - BIG STOP

BIG STOP
Character, a sweet and understanding heart. That's what I judge people by.

CLOSE - BLEEK

BLEEK
Then what?

CLOSE - BIG STOP

BIG STOP
Right! It's not that easy. Some people are real good at hiding, revealing their true nature, what they're really 'bout. A lot of times the only way you find out is if a crisis arrives.

CLOSE - BLEEK

BLEEK
Are you saying I have to be in a car accident to know?

CLOSE - BIG STOP

BIG STOP
Son, I hope not, but it be's like that sometime.

ANGLE - BLEEK AND BIG STOP

BIG STOP
That's enough. My arm is about to fall off.

65 INT: "BENEATH THE UNDERDOG" - NIGHT
ANGLE - STAGE

Butterbean is doing his rendition of a Mississippi Wayback Bayou Blues number.

66 INT: DRESSING ROOM - NIGHT

A barber who the cats call CHERRY is hooking up their heads. We hear the kind of talk one hears in the neighborhood barbershop.

67 EXT: BACK ALLEY - STAGE DOOR - NIGHT

Giant is waiting at the backstage entrance when Bleek approaches.

GIANT
Yo, you got the money yet?

BLEEK
I'm working on it.

GIANT
Don't work too long.

BLEEK
In the meantime, stay out of the spotlight ... So what are you gonna do?

Giant pauses, then ...

GIANT
In the immortal words of Darryl Dawkins, "When all is said and done, there's nothing left to say or do."

Bleek shakes his head, Giant follows him into the club as Roberto holds the stage door open.

68 INT: BACKSTAGE - NIGHT

Shadow walks up to Giant.

SHADOW
I want you to know Clarke and I are hanging tough.

BLEEK
Cool. She's free to do as she pleases. Good luck, Clarke is good people.

SHADOW
Just wanted to let you know.

BLEEK
Bet. Play pretty tonight.

SHADOW
But you know dat.

69 INT: "BENEATH THE UNDERDOG" - NIGHT

Giant sees Indigo and Clarke, and goes to speak to the both of them at separate tables.

ANGLE - MEN'S ROOM - NIGHT

Giant comes into the men's room and up to urinal.

ANGLE - BATHROOM STALLS

Rod and Madlock emerge from two adjoining stalls and surprise Giant who has just zipped up his pants.

ANGLE - MEN'S ROOM

MADLOCK
We don't believe in killing our brothers and sisters, but you're definitely gonna be hurt.

CLOSE - GIANT

A realization comes over his face. He's done. This is going to be one serious ass-kicking and nobody, not even Bleek, can get him outta this one.

GIANT
And I think that's about it, sports fans. The game is over, the fat lady has sung. I can hang it up. It's ovah. O-V-A-H.

ANGLE - STAGE

The Bleek Quintet takes the bandstand to applause and jumps right into it.

CUT TO:

70 EXT: BACK ALLEY - NIGHT

Giant is being pummeled by blow after blow. He screams.

CUT TO:

ANGLE - STAGE

Bleek hears something.

GIANT (OS)
BLEEK.

CUT TO:

ANGLE - BACK ALLEY

Eggy and Born Knowledge tell Roberto to scram as they block the backstage door. Giant still screams as the multitude of fists rain down on him like a thunderstorm.

CUT TO:

ANGLE - STAGE

GIANT (OS)
HELP ME, BLEEK. HELP ME.

Bleek hears the screams; he understands exactly what is happening. The audience hears too, and wonders what the hell is going on. Bleek looks at the band.

BLEEK
Louder.

The band plays <u>louder</u> and <u>faster</u>.

Here we have a TIGHT MONTAGE, INTERCUTTING the band playing with Giant getting the shit kicked out of him. Bleek is trying all he can to drown out the wailing of his friend.

CUT TO:

ANGLE - ALLEY

Madlock and Rod stand above a bloody pulp that used to be Giant. In SLOW MOTION Rod winds up his Sunday punch. He rears back and brings his fist from wayback in Alabama; it gains speed coming up through North Carolina in a crash collision with Giant's head. We

SMASH CUT TO:

CLOSE - CYMBAL

GIANT (OS)
BLEEK.

Rhythm does a cymbal crash. The song is over and the screaming has stopped. Bleek leaves the bandstand.

ANGLE - BACKSTAGE DOOR

The door is blocked by Eggy and Born Knowledge.

BLEEK
Move out the way.

EGGY
Bleek. Go in peace. I'm asking you, go in peace.

Bleek pushes forward.

BORN KNOWLEDGE
Go on. It won't be pretty.

71 EXT: BACK ALLEY - NIGHT

Madlock and Rod hover over an unconscious Giant, who is choking on his own blood. Sugar Ray didn't beat Jake LaMotta this bad.

Bleek rushes to Giant and lifts his head off the cold and wet sidewalk.

BLEEK
I WAS GETTING HIM THE MONEY TONIGHT.

MADLOCK
Too little. Too late.

ROD
He's not dead. He'll be alright.

Bleek takes a wild swing and misses.

ROD (contd)
Now, why did you do that?

MADLOCK
We're gonna have to give you some of this too.

Bleek takes a boxing stance and before he can get off one punch, Madlock pops him five quick times square on right in the mouth. Blood and teeth fly everywhere. Bleek flies back like a projectile and lands on top of some garbage cans next to Giant.

ANGLE - BACKSTAGE DOOR

Eggy and Born Knowledge no longer able to keep the crowd in, open the door.

72 EXT: BACK ALLEY - NIGHT

The crowd, led by Shadow, rushes into the alley. Indigo faints into the arms of Butterbean and Clarke starts screaming like her child has been murdered.

ANGLE - ALLEY

At the end of the alley Rod and Madlock slowly walk away, never looking back.

ANGLE - CROWD

Moe and Josh fight their way through the crowd and look at Giant and Bleek.

MOE
NOT IN THE MOUTH. NOT IN THE MOUTH. YOU BUSTED HIS MOUTH. YOU BUSTED HIS MOUTH. THAT'S MONEY YOU FUCKED WITH.

At this point it's beyond the point of bedlam. People are yelling for "an ambulance," "call the cops," and start to push and shove.

MOE (contd)
Shadow, get your guys and get back and play.

SHADOW
Fuck you.

MOE
I said get back on that stage and play.

SHADOW
Fuck, no.

JOSH
Moe, leave it alone.

SHADOW
We ain't playing here ever again.

MOE
You won't play <u>anywhere</u>.

SHADOW
This ain't a plantation, we're men, not slaves, and we want to be respected as such.

The band is defiant, they won't budge.

JOSH
Moe, let's close it for tonight.

The CAMERA CRANES UP as the cop cars and ambulances roar down the alley as we

FADE OUT.

FADE IN:

73 TITLE: ONE YEAR LATER

The rain is pouring down as Bleek stands across from the "Dizzy Club," a new and bigger jazz club than "Beneath the Underdog." On the marquee reads "THE SHADOW HENDERSON QUARTET featuring CLARKE BENTANCOURT." A long line of people holding umbrellas wait to enter.

ANGLE - BLEEK

Bleek walks across the street to Giant, who's the doorman.

BLEEK
Midget.

Giant can't believe his eyes.

GIANT
Where have you been? Nobody hasn't seen or heard from you. How you doin'?

BLEEK
Good.

GIANT
I got this gig and I stopped gambling, but I go to meetings once a week.

Giant looks at the trumpet case Bleek is holding.

GIANT (contd)
You gonna sit in.

BLEEK
If Shadow lets me.

GIANT
He's doing alright.

BLEEK
He always wanted to have his own shit. Good for him, I'm happy for the brother.

Giant looks at Bleek's mouth. It's not the same, it looks funny, a lot of scar tissue, a lot of surgery. He wants to ask Bleek about it, but he doesn't have the heart.

74 INT: "DIZZY CLUB" - NIGHT

The band, Shadow, Bottom, Left Hand, Rhythm and Clarke are all onstage.

CLOSE - SHADOW

He has mike in hand.

SHADOW
At this time I'd like to ask Bleek Gilliam to come up.

ANGLE - BLEEK

Bleek walks from the back of the club to the stage, greeted by a very warm applause. (PLEASE, NO STANDING OVATIONS. IT'S TOO CLICHE AND DOES NOT WORK IN FILMS.)

ANGLE - STAGE

Everybody hugs Bleek as the applause continues and Clarke gives him a kiss. Finished with the greetings, the band begins to play.

CLOSE - BLEEK

Right away you can hear Bleek has lost it, he can't play, not up to his standards. He lost it in the alley a year ago trying to save his best friend from being killed. Bleek can't lie to himself anymore, he's done that for a year, but beginning tonight he accepts what he's already feared.

CLOSE - BLEEK'S MOUTH

In SLOW MOTION Bleek takes the trumpet out of his mouth.

ANGLE - STAGE

Bleek takes a bow, touches Shadow gently on the shoulder and leaves the stage. One by one the band stops playing.

ANGLE - CLUB

The audience is silent as Bleek walks through them, past Giant and into the street.

75 EXT: "DIZZY CLUB" - NIGHT

It is raining harder now and Giant limps behind Bleek.

GIANT
It's alright, Bleek. It's OK.

BLEEK
I'll never play again. Never again.

GIANT
But you ain't dead. You're still alive.

Bleek stops and hands Giant his trumpet. He turns away.

GIANT (contd)
Bleek, where are you going?

HIGH ANGLE - STREET

Bleek walks away, leaving Giant in the street.

76 EXT: INDIGO'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

Bleek is ringing Indigo's buzzer, his hand stays on the bell. He has an urgency about him, like he's running out of time.

INDIGO (VO)
Who is it?

BLEEK
Me. Bleek.

INDIGO (VO)
Be right down.

CLOSE - BLEEK

Bleek's face is wet from the rain and he dries it with his hands.

ANGLE - DOOR

Indigo opens the door; she's dressed in a nightgown.

INDIGO
Bleek.

BLEEK
May I come in?

She fully opens the door.

77 INT: INDIGO'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

INDIGO
Where have you been?

BLEEK
It doesn't matter.

INDIGO
It doesn't matter?

Indigo goes after him right away. She's been waiting for the moment.

INDIGO (contd)
I haven't heard from you in over a year. You always have been a selfish person.

BLEEK
I admit it. Most artists are. That's the only way to get any work done. I was driven by a single goal. My music. If it pleases you, I'll say it again. I was a selfish motherfucker.

INDIGO
You didn't trust me. You didn't know me, nor talk to me. I would have never, never done anything to stop you from doing what you had to do. I wanted what's best for you, only to enhance, not to hold you back.

BLEEK
I know now.

INDIGO
Back then it could have been so easy. You'll never be able to play again, and now you want my love. Bleek, you had my love then, you had your music. You had both.

Bleek is a desperate man, and he does what desperate men do: <u>Beg</u> and <u>plead</u>.

BLEEK
You gotta let me redeem myself.

INDIGO
Redemption.

He puts his hands on Indigo's shoulders.

INDIGO (contd)
Don't, Bleek.

BLEEK
I once read, I forget where, a married couple was on a plane and it was going down, about to crash into the sea. Without thinking, they tore off their clothes and began to make love ferociously, right there in their seats, oblivious to anyone and everything. They didn't care. The plane was about to crash and they all would be dead.

Bleek begins to pull Indigo closer to him.

INDIGO
Get off me, Bleek.

BLEEK
They loved each other dearly and wanted to be together if they had to go. That plane, by some miracle, avoided crashing, but how were they to know?

Bleek is now pressed up against Indigo as she struggles.

CLOSE - BLEEK AND INDIGO

BLEEK
I want to be with you. I want you to have my son.

Indigo has started to cry.

INDIGO
I don't know. I don't know. It's been too long.

He starts to kiss her.

BLEEK
A son.

INDIGO
How can you be so sure?

BLEEK
A boy.

Bleek lifts Indigo up and she locks her legs around his waist. Standing up, Bleek and Indigo make love, not boning, not the mo' better but make love, like their two very lives depended on it.

CUT TO:

CLOSE - ELECTRON MICROSCOPIC SHOT

Using one of the HIGH-POWERED MICROSCOPE JAMMIES, WE SEE the moment of conception. The sperm meets the egg.

SMASH CUT TO:

CLOSE - INDIGO

She screams for joy.

CUT TO:

78 THE MONTAGE FINALE

The end of this film will be seven minutes and forty-six seconds long. Why? Because that's the length of "Love Supreme," the monument jazz recording of John Coltrane. This piece, "Love Supreme" will play over, underneath and with the MONTAGE which will cover the span of eight years.

A) Indigo is pregnant (showing).

B) Bleek looks at his trumpet.

C) Bleek and Indigo get married at a small wedding. Giant is the best man.

D) Bleek and Indigo walk over the Brooklyn Bridge.

E) Indigo in labor.

F) Bleek rushes Indigo to the hospital.

G) Indigo is giving birth.

H) Bleek watches.

I) Their son pops out of Indigo.

J) Bleek holds his son.

K) Bleek brings his son and wife home.

L) Bleek at school; he's a music teacher.

M) Big Stop gives his grandson, Miles, a baseball glove.

N) Miles is crawling.

O) Miles is walking.

P) Bleek and Indigo walk with Miles on first day of school.

Q) Miles' birthday party; he's three years old.

R) Bleek is giving his son trumpet lessons and we

CUT TO:

79 EXT: BLEEK'S LOFT - DAY

Four kids are yelling at the top of their lungs. These are the same four kids WE SAW at the beginning of the movie.

TYRONE
Yo, Miles. Yo, Miles. Yo, Miles. Come on out to play. Come on out to play.

JOE
We're wasting time on him.

ANGLE - WINDOW

INDIGO
Boys! Boys! Please be quiet.

CLOSE - TYRONE

TYRONE
Sorry, Mrs. Gilliam. We want to know if Miles can come out?

CLOSE - INDIGO

INDIGO
I understand that, but your noise has to stop.

She pulls her head back in.

80 INT: BLEEK'S LOFT - DAY

WE DOLLY as Indigo leads us to MILES, eight years old and he's practicing his scales on his trumpet under the watchful eye of his father.

INDIGO
Miles, didn't I tell your hoodlum friends not to come around here?

BLEEK
Aw, Gem. Leave the boy alone.

MILES
Can I go out now?

INDIGO
Not until you finish your practice.

MILES
What about then?

INDIGO
We'll see.

TYRONE (OS)
Yo, Miles. Yo, Miles.

Miles looks at his father.

BLEEK
We're done for the day.

Before Indigo can protest, Miles has grabbed his baseball glove, cap, and runs out.

ANGLE -- WINDOW

Bleek takes Indigo by the hand and goes to the window.

BLEEK
Let the boy have some fun.

ANGLE - BLEEK'S, INDIGO'S POV

Miles and his friends run down the block to the park, and it looks like they're having the time of their lives.

CLOSE - BLEEK AND INDIGO

Bleek and Indigo stand arm in arm, in the window; he tries to remember what it felt like to be that young, playing baseball with Big Stop, not having a care in the world.

FADE OUT.

THE END